



**December 2004**

# US 12 UPDATE

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## SPECIAL MENTION

Construction on US 12 should not significantly impact motorists participating in Lewis and Clark Bicentennial events and celebrations. For current construction updates, please visit us on the web at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/regions/southcentral/construction/update.htm> or call the Washington State Travel Information System at 5-1-1.



## TOUCHET'S OUTSTANDING CITIZENS

Each year, Touchet students are challenged to solve a community problem through a program called "Project Citizen." This year a group of hard-working 7<sup>th</sup> graders took second place statewide in this national competition by tackling the future alignment of US 12. On May 27, 2004, the students gave a repeat performance of their award winning presentation to a group of WSDOT engineers, elected officials, and the media.

The class focused on Phase 7 of the US 12 widening project because it will directly affect their community. The students held town meetings and recorded comments from the public. They took into account the same constraints as the engineers and selected a route for US 12 which seemed the most logical and favorable for the majority of their residents.

"It's the safest and doesn't have a lot of sharp turns," said Leigh Anna Burchell.

Not only did these students discover many of the challenges involved in determining a highway alignment, they gained more understanding about how govern-



**Touchet 7th graders present US 12 project to WSDOT, elected officials and media.**

ment works. Student Shelby Osborn wrote letters to Congressman George Nethercutt and Senator Patty Murray and made many attempts to reach them by phone. The students were surprised at how difficult it was to reach the busy government officials. Eventually, they were successful in scheduling a meeting with Nethercutt, and Senator Murray intended to send them a video response.

After the presentation, students asked

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## COALITION'S CORNER

### Additional Federal Dollars Approved

The U.S. Highway 12 Coalition recently secured an additional \$2,250,000 of federal funding for the four-laning of U.S. Highway 12 when President George

Bush signed the 2005 federal budget on December 6, 2004. During the past three years the coalition has obtained a total of \$10.6 million in federal assistance. This funding will be used to complete the design and acquire the right of way for Phase 6.

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## WHO ARE THE US 12 PROJECT ENGINEERS (PEs)?



**Project Engineer  
Moe Davari**

Moe Davari spent most of his life involved in construction. His father had a large construction company in Iran and this is where Moe grew to love spending time outdoors at the sites. Moe decided to become a civil engineer and earned his degree from the University of Colorado in Boulder.

Moe has worked for WSDOT for 24 years now. When state construction projects were booming in the early 80s, he relocated to the Tri-Cities and worked on the I-82 bridges over the Columbia and Umatilla Rivers. He's contributed to many local projects including design of the

SR 240 bridge over the Yakima River. Currently, Moe is the Construction PE for Phase 1 of the US 12 widening project. He's eager to improve safety and mobility in the region.

Moe wants public feedback, both positive and negative, because he feels that it really helps. "I encourage the public to call me with any questions or concerns they may have," he stated. "It's rewarding when we hear we did something good, and we learn from our mistakes with the negative feedback." Moe also welcomes drop-in visitors with questions or comments. Contact information can be found at the bottom of page four in this newsletter. Call him if you need directions.

Moe's most quotable quote: "Let's talk about it."

Kerry Grant was another PE born into the field. His father and uncle owned Grant Construction Company in Coeur d' Alene, Idaho, where he began getting plenty of experience in 1967. Kerry earned his civil engineering degree in 1982 from the University of Idaho. He began working for WSDOT in November 1982.

Kerry has worked on many interesting projects, one of which was the scoping for the new roadway that would replace the part of SR 504 lost during the eruption of Mt. St. Helens.

Kerry feels that it is exciting to be a part of the US 12 widening team, especially because this road will save lives and help people reach their destination. He is the

Design PE for Phases 4, 6, 7 and 8. He hopes that the public will contact him with any questions or comments.

"I value public feedback highly. It gives us knowledge about the people, their lifestyles, and how we can help or are hurting them. Such knowledge is invaluable to the design process," Kerry commented.

Kerry's most quotable quote: "This is the fun part of engineering!"



**Project Engineer  
Kerry Grant**



**Project Engineer  
Troy Suing**

Since boyhood, Troy loved construction projects, especially those that were large-scale. He remembers school field trips to dams and bridges. His interest with civil engineering was a natural fit for his passion for large structures.

Troy earned his degree in civil engineering from Oregon State University in Corvallis. Currently in his 12th year with WSDOT, he finds the job extremely satisfying because he can help people and communities. Recently, Troy worked on re-designing two interchanges in Union Gap

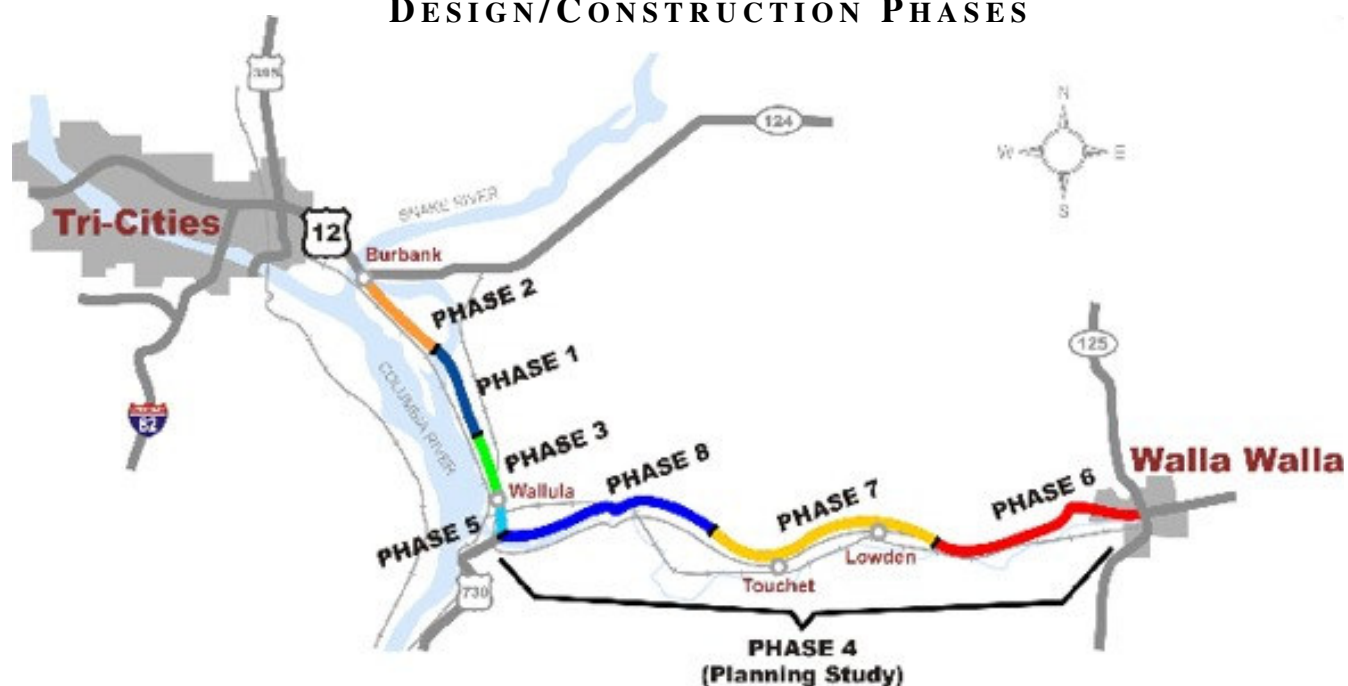
that provide access to Yakima and Union Gap from I-82.

Troy is the US 12 Design PE for Phases 2, 3 and 5. He feels that his desire to minimize impacts to property owners and businesses, while delivering the safest and most cost effective project, will be a winning combination for the users of US 12. He also values and welcomes public feedback and is most easily reached by phone.

Troy emphasized, "Getting feedback from the public is vital for a project like this. Whenever we are impacting people's property and lives, it is critical that we listen."

Troy's most quotable quote: "Will do!"

## FOUR-LANING US HIGHWAY 12 DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION PHASES



### COALITION'S CORNER: WORKING WITH CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

*(Continued from page 1)*

U.S. Senator Patty Murray and Congressman George Nethercutt have played instrumental roles in securing the federal funding. Senator Maria Cantwell has also been supportive.

The U.S. Highway 12 Coalition was formed in August 2001 by a group of public agencies and private businesses to develop a comprehensive strategy to advance Walla Walla's long sought after goal of four-laning U.S. Highway 12. The coalition's next goal is to obtain funding that would allow construction to proceed on Phase 6 as of November 2006.

To learn more about the coalition's efforts, you may contact Jim Kuntz at Port of Walla Walla (509) 525-3100 or visit the web site at [www.USHighway12.com](http://www.USHighway12.com).



**(left to right) Walla Walla Councilman Jerry Cummins, Walla Walla County Commissioner Greg Tompkins, Port of Walla Walla Commissioner Dr. Fred Bennett and College Place Mayor Ed Ammon in front of the U.S. Capitol.**





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Mailing Address

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## TOUCHET'S OUTSTANDING CITIZENS

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Project Engineer Kerry Grant if he would contact them when the final alignment was determined.

"Yes," said Grant. "It will probably be next year, so you'll be 8<sup>th</sup> graders."

Teacher, Donnetta Elsasser, expressed her intentions to follow the US 12 project through to its construction. In 2003, Touchet students did a Project Citizen presentation on creating a safe walkway. The project earned Touchet a solar powered traffic signal, for which the opening ceremony was held June 15, 2004. This year's project may earn them some influence on where US 12 will actually go.



**Well-deserved media attention from Walla Walla Union Bulletin Reporter Andy Porter.**

Elsasser is proud of this class. She thinks they are fabulous. But she wanted to add an important note about children and performance. "You give an opportunity to any kid and they're going to jump on it if it's a real, authentic learning opportunity."

State Sen. Mike Hewitt and Walla Walla County Public Works Director Phil Merrell had nothing but praise for the students after the presentation. Sen. Hewitt emphasized, "There are a lot of people that don't understand the complexity of what's going on here.

I'm sincerely impressed."

"We hope to see this completed before your children are sitting here," added Merrell.